



The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 1973 to improve passenger train service, travel conditions for passengers, and to work for the preservation of historic rail stations.

Monthly meetings are held at locations around the state. Check the website for dates and venues. The public is invited to attend.

MARP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2016-2018

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The Michigan Passenger Editor and Webmaster, Larry Sobczak
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2017 MEETINGS

14 January – REO Town Depot (former Grand Trunk Depot), Lansing
18 February – 1st Methodist Church, Kalamazoo
18 March – Clinton Northern Railway Museum, St. Johns
22 April – Grand Trunk Pub, Detroit
13 May – Chicago Union Station
10 June – Executive Committee
15 July – Traverse City
19 August – Bangor
23 September – Durand Union Station
21 October – Grand Rapids
November – no meeting
02 December – 44th Annual Meeting Dearborn
27 January 2018 – Haslett Public Library

Visit www.marp.org
Email marprail@yahoo.com

Season's Greetings



Continuing a years-long tradition, the Four Flags Garden Club hosted the **26th Annual Hometown Christmas Celebration** at the historic **Amtrak Depot in Niles** on December 2. The 150 year old depot is decorated inside and out by the club's 24 members as a welcome to townsfolk and visitors alike. Handmade ornaments festoon a Fraser Fir tree donated by Pinecrest Christmas Tree Farm. Santa and Mrs. Claus always drop by with cookies and cider and everyone joins in the singing of carols. The tradition of decorating the depot for Christmas began in 1990 when a scene for the movie "Only the Lonely," featuring John Candy, was shot at the depot. When the filmmakers left, they left the lights, and the Four Flags Garden Club and community members joined together in a campaign to keep the lights burning each holiday season.

PLAN A DAY TRIP TO NILES AS PART OF YOUR HOLIDAYS!

*All of us on the MARP Executive Committee
wish you and yours a safe and joyous
holiday season.*

Wolverine Train #350 Makes a Stop in Ypsilanti

By Larry Krieg

In the mid-nineteenth century, Ypsilanti's Michigan Central Railroad station was busier than Ann Arbor's. Now, Ann Arbor's is the busiest in the state, and Ypsi has no station at all. Since January 13, 1984, the last run of the *Michigan Executive* from Jackson to Detroit, no train has called at Ypsilanti for passengers. In fact, there is no longer any facility on which passengers can board or detrain.

Fortunately, there are many citizens in Ypsi who are well aware of the potential of a station to revive the economic prospects of their city. The project has support from representatives in the Michigan House, especially Rep. Ronnie Peterson, who represents Ypsilanti in Lansing. Debbie Dingell, Ypsi's U.S. Congressional Representative, is also a staunch supporter of the project. However, all these representatives are in the minority party, which constrains their ability to provide the needed financial support.

Undaunted, Rep. Peterson has undertaken to raise support in other ways. He organized a spectacular event to raise awareness and get the process moving again.

The event was held Friday, December 1, 2017. With the assistance of Derrick James, Director, Government Affairs at Amtrak, Rep. Peterson arranged for Amtrak 350 to stop in Ypsilanti to pick up about 35 community leaders. The train had to pick up people in the grade-crossing at Cross and River Streets.

Many of the group had never traveled by train, and were amazed at the comfort in coach class, at the quiet running, the smooth ride, and the apparent speed of the train. Most were surprised how quickly and easily the train brought them to Detroit, after a brief stop in Dearborn's beautiful new Dingell Transportation Center. John O'Reilly, Mayor of Dearborn, was among the enthusiastic group participants.

In Detroit, the group went first down Woodward Avenue to enjoy the splendid art deco Guardian Building (also home of Transit Riders United, a MARP partner). And as if that was not enough, the group was treated to a beautiful tour of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Heading home, train 355 arrived pretty much on time, and again group members were impressed by the rapid comfort of the trip to Ypsilanti.

Amtrak Train #355 returns the group to join the Friday evening revelries in downtown Ypsilanti.



Dignitaries board Amtrak Train #350 in Ypsilanti bound for Detroit.

Arriving in Ypsi, crowds of Friday night revelers were on hand. Normally unfazed by Amtrak blasting noisily through the middle of Depot Town, many were amazed to see the train stop and a large group of passengers actually get off. One young woman danced in the street, hugging her friends and shouting, "The train is coming! The train is coming!"

Impressive as the event was, there is clearly a great deal of work to be done. The first step is for Ypsilanti City Council to approve continuation of the station project. Many details need to be ironed out, but the enthusiasm generated by this event seems very likely to translate into action.

*MARP members are invited to let **Representative Peterson** know that his efforts on behalf of passenger train service are appreciated.*

HOLIDAY EVENTS AT DURAND UNION STATION

Late Night Tree Viewings 6-9 PM every Tuesday and Thursday in December

Christmas Day Tree Viewing 3 PM to 7 PM

Enjoy more than 40 illuminated Christmas Trees

December 8th **Holiday Open House** 6 PM to 8 PM.

FOR DETAILS VISIT durandstation.org/events





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Founder John DeLora Honored at MARP's 44th Annual Meeting on December 2

Harry Gow, MARP member, founder of Transport Action Canada and an old friend of John DeLora's, was on hand to present a framed certificate in recognition of DeLora's many years of advocacy on behalf of train passengers. Gow expressed gratitude to DeLora for writing model legislation to give federal statutory standing to Canada's passenger rail system. Steve Vagnozzi followed with a legislative Proclamation in honor of John DeLora. The Proclamation was the result of an initiative by State Representative Kevin Hertel.

Invited guests included U.S. Representative Debbie Dingell, 12th Congressional District, and Barry Murray, Director of Dearborn Economic and Community Development, both of whom spoke glowingly of the positive impact of the new John D. Dingell Transportation Center (a.k.a. Dearborn Amtrak station). Rep. Dingell voiced strong support for Amtrak's national network and was emphatic in her view that a high functioning public transit system is essential to the future of SE Michigan, stating, "Freedom of movement and **access** to public transportation is vital to ensure economic well-being and quality of life for many people."

Derrick James, Director, Governmental Affairs, Amtrak, Midwest region, prefaced his presentation "Amtrak 2018 Update" with comments on the previous day's event that brought decision makers together in Ypsilanti followed by a train ride to Detroit. He stated that there is progress toward a station stop in Ypsilanti and MARP's help will be needed to get it done. He commended Michigan for its robust Thruway bus services. Nationwide, Thruway buses provide 1.5 million trips and bring \$26 million in revenue to Amtrak. James said that nearly half (15 million) of Amtrak's record 31.7 million passengers in 2017 rode on state-supported routes. He said the Amtrak's new CEO, Richard Anderson, is "laser focused" on customer service, but also looking at Amtrak's financial picture and bent on "driving toward zero federal operating support." A first step in reassessing Amtrak's discount programs has eliminated the 15% student discount on long distance routes. Amtrak is trimming its management ranks, has achieved a 64% reduction in debt and is looking for more partnerships like the Colorado Ski Train

which is being sponsored this year by Lyft.

Keynote speaker Rick Harnish, Executive Director of Midwest High Speed Rail Association, spoke about the business model he has developed "to get the 'money people' interested" in advancing an integrated Midwest network of fast, frequent and reliable passenger trains. **The Phased Network Approach** starts with a big, exciting vision but then steps it back to a series of projects focused on what can be achieved in the next year, two years, etc., adding incrementally, over time, to the existing network. Instead of throwing up barriers or getting mired in negativity, ask the question, "What happens if . . . we straighten that curve? . . . add another daily train? . . . etc.?" Harnish noted that the map of existing public transportation services in Michigan shows that the state has the basic structure already in place. For a truly effective service, "We have to figure out how to get from Chicago to Detroit in 3 hours." How to do this? Start with a state-wide vision to get people interested. Identify the key districts and work to attract the entire body of that political entity. Engage the people who control the money. Work to bring the various constituencies together, including the freight railroads. For a more complete discussion of "The Phased Network Approach", read **The White Paper**.

In a **brief Executive Committee meeting** following the Annual Meeting, Charles Shong of Lowell was appointed as West Region Chair, replacing Warren Fritz of Kalamazoo.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS !

MARP's first meeting of 2018 will be held on Saturday, January 27, 10:30 to noon, at the Haslett Public Library. Details will follow in January.

It is with regret that MARP ends a recent tradition of holding the first meeting of each new year in the former Grand Trunk Western Depot in Lansing. Use of the facility now requires payment of a security guard.

CORRECTIONS: Carolyn Cokley's name was misspelled in the September issue. Carolyn is Director of the Customer Advisory Program, National Association of Railroad Passengers.

"Train Tracks that Float" in the November issue had a typo. The expected completion date of the East Link light rail line linking downtown Seattle and Bellevue is 2023.

In the eight years between 2008 and 2016, the federal government spent \$143 billion in general funds subsidizing highways. This is more than three times what Amtrak has received in its entire forty-six year history.

View from elsewhere . . .

“What is the Senate thinking? Why single out a modest incentive that encourages people to bike to work, increasing community health and reducing congestion, while maintaining a significantly larger and more expensive incentive for people to drive?”

—Tim Blumenthal, People for Bikes, commenting on the **Senate plan** to eliminate the meager \$20 per month in commuter benefits available to people who bike to work.

“Thankfully, the U.S. Congress is beginning to act in a way that recognizes the importance of a strong and robust national network. Congress provided the U.S. Department of Transportation with a boost in appropriations for 2018 that will fuel economic growth nationwide, especially in rural and less wealthy communities throughout regions of the U.S. known as ‘flyover country’”.

—Jim Mathews, CEO of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, in an **op-ed** highlighting NARP’s recent economic report **Dismantling a National Transportation Network**.



Flight Training

The Boeing 737 makes a long journey by rail before it takes to the air. This fuselage was manufactured at Spirit AeroSystems in Wichita KS and is shown here on the last leg of its journey by rail to Boeing’s main plant in Renton WA for final assembly. Most of these journeys—over desert and mountain—are uneventful, but in July 2014 there was some excitement (and dismay) west of Missoula MT when the train derailed and **dumped three fuselages** into the Clark’s Fork River.



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